

Listing of Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listing, of claims in the application.

1-25. (Cancelled)

26. (Allowed - Previously Presented) A method of conducting a game of chance on a gaming machine, comprising:

receiving a wager from a player;

initiating play of the game of chance;

pausing the game of chance;

storing a status of the paused game of chance at a central database linked to and remote from the gaming machine;

receiving another wager at another gaming machine operating a different game of chance;

retrieving the status of the paused game of chance from the central database; and

if the status meets predetermined criteria, unlocking an otherwise unavailable feature such that the feature is available to the player in the different game of chance.

27. (Allowed - Previously Presented) The method of claim 26, wherein the predetermined criteria is fulfillment of predetermined requirements in the game of chance.

28. (Allowed - Previously Presented) A method of conducting a game of chance on a gaming machine, comprising:

receiving a wager from a player to play a first wagering game;
conducting the first wagering game; and
if a status of the first wagering game meets predetermined criteria, unlocking an otherwise unavailable feature of a second wagering game such that the feature is available to the player.

29. (Allowed - Previously Presented) The method of claim 28, wherein the game of chance includes:

saving the status of the first wagering game; and
loading the status into the second wagering game.

30. (Allowed - Previously Presented) The method of claim 29, wherein saving the status of the first wagering game includes saving the status at a central database linked to and remote from the gaming machine.

31. (Allowed - Previously Presented) The method of claim 28, wherein the unlocking feature is selected from a group consisting of bonus rounds, characters, reel symbols, special effects, and other game play elements.

32. (Allowed - Previously Presented) A method for playing a gaming machine, comprising:

- receiving a wager from a player;
- initiating play of the game of chance;
- pausing the game of chance;
- storing a status of the paused game of chance at a central database linked to and remote from the gaming machine;
- receiving another wager from the player;
- retrieving the status of the paused game of chance from the central database;
- continuing play of the game of chance beginning from a point at which the game of chance was paused; and

wherein if the status meets predetermined criteria, unlocking an otherwise unavailable feature such that the feature is available to the player.

33. (Allowed - Previously Presented) A method for playing a gaming machine, comprising:

- receiving a wager from a player;
- initiating play of the game of chance;
- pausing the game of chance;
- storing a status of the paused game of chance at a central database linked to and remote from the gaming machine;
- receiving another wager from the player;
- retrieving the status of the paused game of chance from the central database;

continuing play of the game of chance beginning from a point at which the game of chance was paused; and

wherein if the status fulfills predetermined requirements in the game of chance, unlocking an otherwise unavailable feature such that the feature is available to the player.

34. (Allowed - Previously Presented) A system for conducting a game of chance, comprising:
a gaming machine including

means for receiving a wager from a player;

means for initiating play of the game of chance; and

means for pausing the game of chance; and

a central database for storing a status of the paused game of chance, the central database being linked to and remote from the gaming machine;

means for retrieving the status of the paused game of chance from the central database;

means for continuing play of the game of chance beginning from a point at which the game of chance was paused;

means for receiving another wager; and

means, responsive to the status meeting predetermined criteria, for unlocking an otherwise unavailable feature such that the feature is available to the player.

35. (Allowed - Previously Presented) A system for conducting a game of chance, comprising:

- a gaming machine including
 - means for receiving a wager from a player;
 - means for initiating play of the game of chance; and
 - means for pausing the game of chance; and
- a central database for storing a status of the paused game of chance, the central database being linked to and remote from the gaming machine;
- means for retrieving the status of the paused game of chance from the central database;
- means for receiving another wager;
- means for continuing play of the game of chance beginning from a point at which the game of chance was paused; and
- means responsive to the status meeting predetermined requirements in the game chance, for unlocking an otherwise unavailable feature such that the feature is available to the player.